CHOLLA NEEDLES
Issue 1

Cholla Needles
Issue 1

edited by r soos

Published in Joshua Tree, CA

Copyright © 2017 Cholla Needles

All rights reserved.
Individual copyrights revert
to authors upon publication.

ISBN: 1542700655
ISBN-13: 978-1542700658

a poem is a mere cholla needle
imbedded painfully deep through the skin
when withdrawn the scar lengthens
and the pain worsens
time heals the pain
the scar remains forever

r soos

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks are due to the publisher and editors at Hi-Desert Star for providing publicity to attract local poets to submit to this new poetry journal. Extra thanks are also due to local Facebook group admins who allowed notices for poetry to appear on their pages.

POETS

1	Elluisa Vargas	1
2	Dennis Price	9
3	Evelyn Christensen	17
4	Cameron Hendricks	25
5	Debra Walworth	33
6	Steve Braff	41
7	Ruth Nolan	49
8	Cynthia Anderson	57
9	Michael Dwayne Smith	65
10	Noreen Lawlor	73

Elluisa Vargas

some kind of something

laying here alone
though I have someone beside me
never felt so beside myself
so ignored

I'm not even here
not even seen
I am a ghost
in this bed

not sure how to feel
should I stay here
or just go back outside
and still my restless mind

I tried to sip some beer
so I could try to unwind
lost in emotions
not sure how to feel

I'm sad enough to cry
but won't allow myself to
should I sit on that windowsill
and return to shutting down

knowing nothing
seeing nothing
but a simple
slight gentle frown

Elluisa Vargas

star gazing

every twinkle
every sparkle
brings a smile
a snarl of laughter

my heart racing
at the touch of your hand

we are side by side
in one another's arms
standing on the sand

I show you and the world
God gave me what I prayed for

choice

pain runs deep
tossing turning
and mostly weep

act as nothing bothers me
another day to ride
while truly crying
dying deep inside

with these thoughts
so much rage

keep it locked up
or release from my cage?

Elluisa Vargas

Alive

Pulse drops to 29
I'm doing everything to hold on
Staying focused
Knowing it's not my time

Can't say a word
Blink my eyes
Let everyone know
I'm still with them

Warm Love

I am nurtured
in your arms

love and comfort
safe and content

most of all
reassured

I can walk any field
full of your kindness

your eyes full of sunshine
crown me as a queen

embraced with your charm

Elluisa Vargas

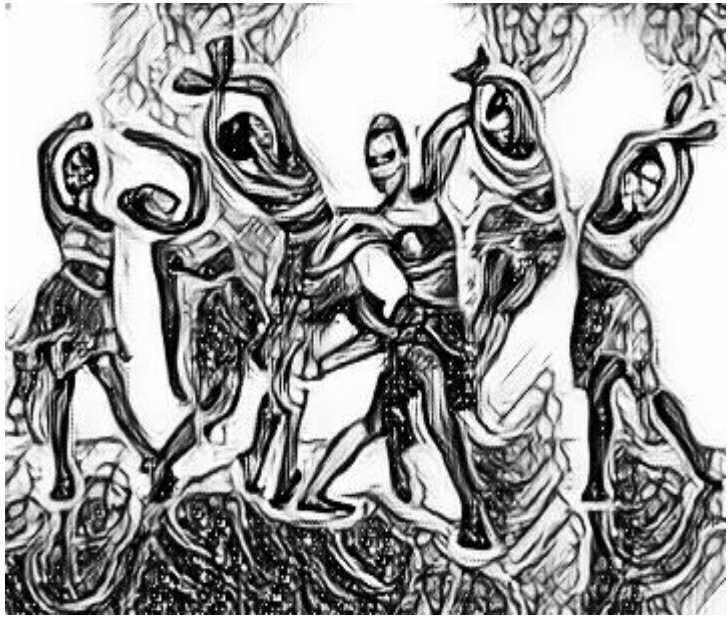
No one

can take your place
I feel my heart race

your hand in mine
seems one of a kind

my head spinning
my feet dancing

full of laughter
as we make our start



Dennis Price

Lost children of God

I am he, have been found.
The play opened in Folsom prison,
ran once and due to unforeseen rioting,
never got another chance.

I was told it was deep and brilliant,
beyond the conception of most men.
That was me.

My work has been in Guiding Light
and Turning the other cheek.
Goodnight sir.

Cholla

Again he finds
he's runnin' behind
watchin' cartoons
lost track of time.

Down the dirt road
the young boy runs.

Late for school
this won't be fun.

Through the field he runs
wearing his PF flyers
down his shortcut trail.

He runs with sure footed
zigs & zags down his desert trail.

Faster and faster
the young boy sails.

A bit farther
he'll not fail.

Down and past
the old Russian's house
who yells
"Hey boya!
Watch out for them
cholla needles!"

Needles

They shimmer they shine
they are on guard all the time.

They take nothing, they are givers
brush up against one, it'll make you quiver.

Pain is not their intent
survival of the land is their nature.

Oh they’re mean painful sticks
demanding respect they always get.

Examination

Last night I laid and wondered
if my life would pass this test

fell into a trouble sleep
that knew no peace or rest

I dreamed I stood before this man of faith
my face was tired and very old

Sir, said Saint Peter,
What have you done
to gain admission here?

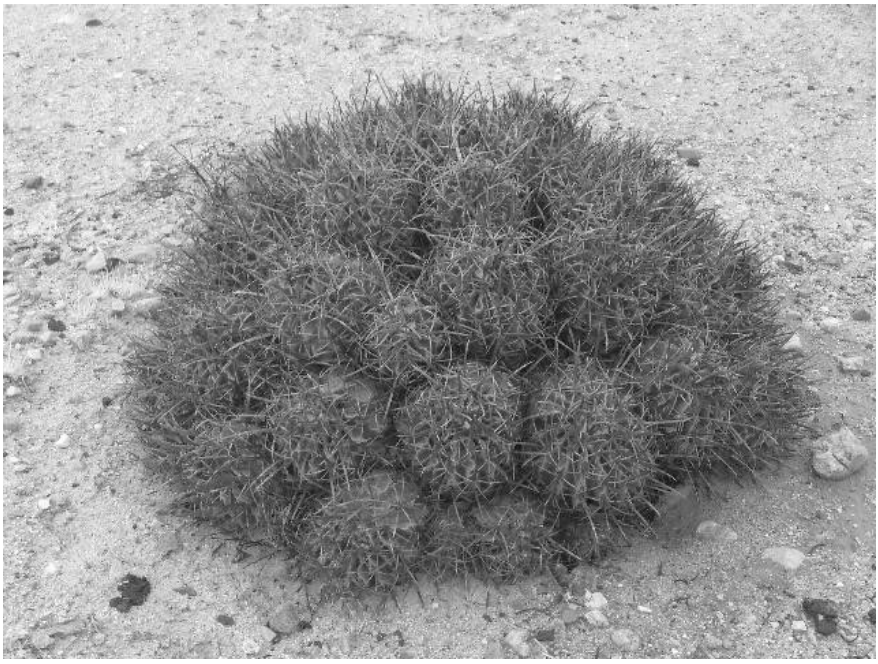
I said I've been a convict sir
for many many years.

I've lied cheated stolen
I know I'm guilty of them all

He turned and said
the ONE who's known as MASTER
will be the judge all.

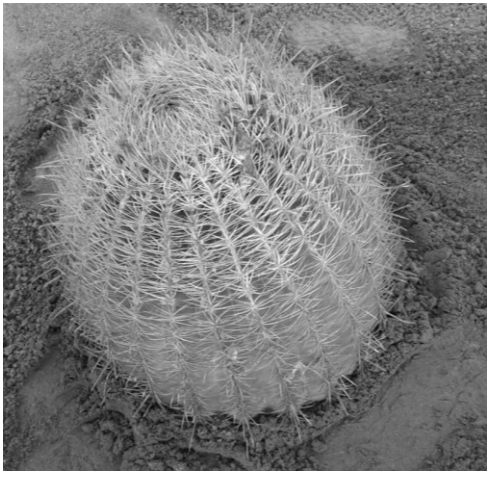
Come inside and give your heart a little rest.
Master knows your here.
Yes, you've passed the test.

Cholla Needles



2/3 Haiku

all you sky divers
this here is not your target



Home

Along these harsh barren ranges
down to the desert valley floor
there are signs of miraculous survival
and beauty even more.

The barrel hides
among the jagged rocks
and the cholla
with the piercing locks

Harsh is the land
for desert dwellers
a gift of endurance
from the Creator's hand.

Evelyn Christensen

Illness

I'm sick
Of lying here being ill
Waiting for some effects
From these pills
Waiting for health
To return to my form
And into my mind
Because maybe the core
Of all this
The vomit, the dizziness
Tremors- Is not
Illness
Not really
Not unless I'm in withdrawal
Painful

Only You

Forget everything I said
Because what good are words when they can't make me feel
They can't pulse around or inside of me
They can't feel the throb inside my dark spaces
Forget everything I did
What use are actions when they can't express my passion
The fire raging in my abdomen when I think of her
Her long hair brushing over my thighs
I can't deny it in the night
That man has no hold over me
Nor will he ever be her
The first touch of lips I longed for
Pressing lips back to mine
I often blamed it on the wine
But it was more than that
It was my spirit calling yours
The skins of our sexes some sort of divine mistake
Or an evolution of all humanity was meant to be
Forget the consequences and condemnation of society
I want her next to me
In the waking hours, in the resting ones
I need you here my love
To ply me in ways no one else has ever done
We can't be over if you're the one
And you're my only one.

Daddy

I can't write you a letter now
I can't take back apologizing to you
Telling you how
Sorry I am
That I slandered your good name
I want to forget or forgive and I thought that I had
But the shame, the shame, the shame
Is overwhelming
At 31, I lie awake at night
If I didn't wear this skirt or that dress
What could I have done right-
And did that even matter?
I still feel your tongue between my toes
I wake early every morning
To my own no no no
Even now I cannot face it
And I know that you are why
Sex is the only way I know how to show love
And I need to have on the lights
So I know he loves me
I'm resisting writing this
I don't want to face it yet
I'll take some Zoloft, lie back down
And do what I do best

After

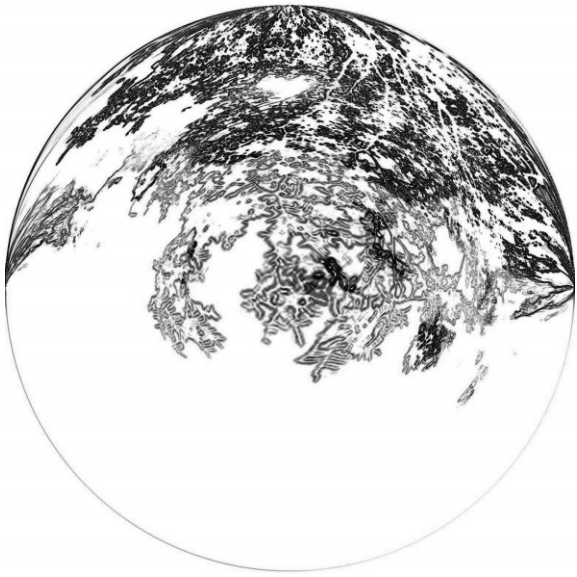
Neglect
Though when I was far removed from you
I took you by the hand
But I can't ask you to understand
The power of seeing a child's knock denied
Their cries follow me into the night
Or of watching my brother die by inches
Do you think I wanted this?
I don't.
My first instinct was that I needed her
But she is surely
Buried somewhere under the debris of you
I wish for things too.
I wish you would see that I was asked to do this.
That it's painful to say to kids
"I don't know when you can return."
And it doesn't matter if you want the bridge to burn...
I will still be here at the end
Wondering why I have to pretend
That you mean nothing to me -
and I'm not allowed to hear your voice
I wish that I had that choice -
But I don't.
Someday you will see
That when you needed me
I was standing beside you.
It's the only thing I can do -
And I hope after the debris is cleared away
I will finally get to say
All the things I needed and those years I missed
I have loved you like no other my sister.
I have loved you more than I thought was possible.

Cave In

The issues that pile themselves on top of me
I'm the thing that is buried underneath
The crushing weight of other people's problems
Reminders about family
Talk about responsibility
And how I have to honor them
No matter how hard I try I see
That my efforts will never get me
Anywhere beyond this den
This pit of frustration. I climb back up then lie
Back flat on my spine with eyes pooled vacuous like a night
Without stars or clouds. My dream is that ten
Years from now I might escape this cave-in
The boulders they have smashed me
With
The pebbles piled for good measure to ensure no sighs
Can leave my body. My spirit following behind me
Because it's used to this.
I stumble forth to grab the light
Forgetting that I'm lying
Prone and the place that I call home does not exist.
There are only these agonizingly shallow breaths
Left beneath the landslide where I went missing.

Will You

Will you still see me as a reflection of yourself
When that reflection is made low and disfigured?
Will you reach out across the barriers of law and politics
To tell me that we can be together if we really want it?
Will my shaved head still hold the appeal for you
That my golden locks did
And after my hand has been maimed will you press lips to it?
I have waited so long darling
To see the fire blaze in your eyes
And after floods and wars
And the hatred of men swelling on me
I have returned.
Did you keep our faith - the only kind of religion that matters -
Will you see everything that I once was
And love me when I'm battered
And broken and small and little use to you
Tell me the lions protect me as much as the wolves
Show me the fierceness of your love.



Cameron Hendricks

What have you wrought?

A smothering indistinctness of darkness as memories shudder.
Once, we shared innocence,
Wide-eyed and free.
But your heart perished.
A clouded fever of darkness,
Tears follow rain, follow darkness.
Your love taken away-
In a torrent of sorrow…
But my love for you will always burn the same.

Keep it positive

My deepest regrets
And most woeful sorrows
Are drowned away
And swept beneath
The sands of time
The fleet of moving, non-stop moving.

To live in the moment
Is to feel the weightless
Thoughts moving in and out of your head
Like traffic jams and the ocean waves.

Nothing can stop you
No nothing can
If you just keep in mind
That everything goes
Just as it comes
Keeping form is not the way anything works.

Angel

Alone, I spend eternity.
Never to find my grace.
Gone, my wings that guide me.
Enveloped in empty space, with a
Love that cannot be replaced.

Reflection

A mirror never speaks the profound truth,
never bares our true soul for viewing.
We only see what we believe ourselves to be-
A skewed perception, not based in truth or reality -
An impostor made of pain and vanity.
A mirror may never speak,
But much is said in that silent reflection staring back.

Scars

Oh what a sight to behold!
And under each scar lies a grief untold.
Am I proud? Am I ashamed? What should I be?
For I was never told of the hell I'd see.
Does that make me any different from you?
It doesn't matter. I am one of the few.
We all have scars, just different kinds.
Some on our bodies, and some in our minds.
When you look in the mirror, I bet you never knew:
Just like me, you are one of the few.

Song

The rain beats a sad love song
and I'm singing along.
I tried to text your phone -
your silence said to leave you alone.
You can't wash away all your pain
By hating me and cursing my name.
Here it is, another dark night,
just wishing I could hold you tight
just holding you tight
by the flickering fire light.

Well now my heart doesn't beat the way it used to,
Back when it was you for me and me for you.
So God please have pity on me and send more rain
to wash away this persistent pain.
Maybe it's time for me to move on
to be over it all and completely done.
But deep down I know you were the only one.
So while the rain continues its sad love song
I'm lying awake and singing along.

Debra Walworth

A Visit to Integratron

A bumpy ride a building scene
An oasis built on one man's dream
Alien visit, whispered word
Directions how to build that world

Science, research, mastery found
Pictures, hammocks, natural sounds
Desert fauna, desert landscapes
Desert pictures, desert shapes

Following science, following souls
Following sounds around the hole
Further on a giant rock
Many more as if in flocks

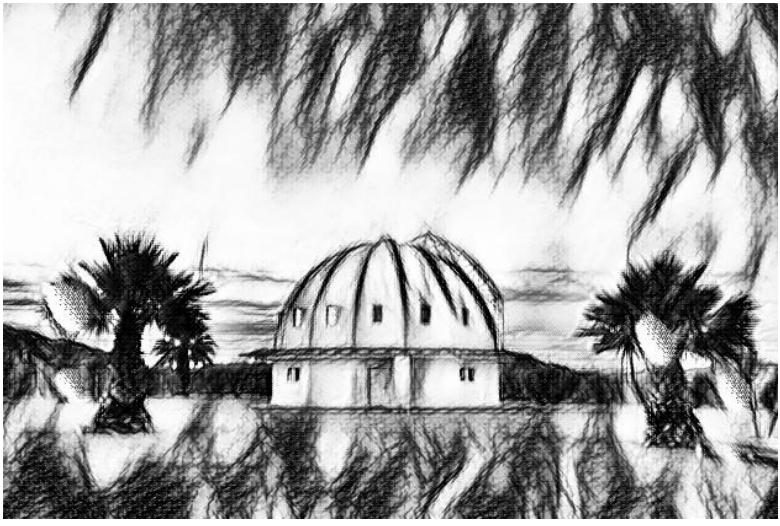
Names mar up the sides of rocks
Where silent echoes claim their spots
Of being here, and claiming fame
By writing their own particular name

Proof of campfires, proof of drink
Broken glass in dirt will sink
Next the cooing of a dove
As humming comes from up above

Then a helicopter fills up the air
And nothing appears from anywhere
How disappointing is the sound
For someone lost and never found

From distant mountain, desert dry
Sand blown about and whispering by
Pictures taken time stands still
We were there beneath that hill

Of giant rocks, and earth's dry crust
Sounds and breezes gently hushed



Sunlight Breaks into the Day

Mountain heaps
Vigils keep
Light creeps
Upward steeps
As dawn seeps

Upon the new day
Light plays
Shadows lay
Hills may
Simply stay

Sands whisper
Weather crisper
Sun blisters
And glitters
Off ricochet

Light

Debra Walworth

Twilit Night

Twilit night
Middle of the night
Stars casting shows delight
Joshua tree standing upright
Shadows dancing full moon bright
Silver raining downward light
Starlit night
A sky captured sight
Milky Way blazes white
Shining, blinking as a wax light
Channel deepened stars ignite
Quiet rests upon the night

A Picture Perfect Postcard

Churning up the mountain to try and get in shape
Swinging arms, swinging legs and breath that comes too late
Puffing up the desert scape with cacti in a row
The kids are up ahead but I am kind of slow

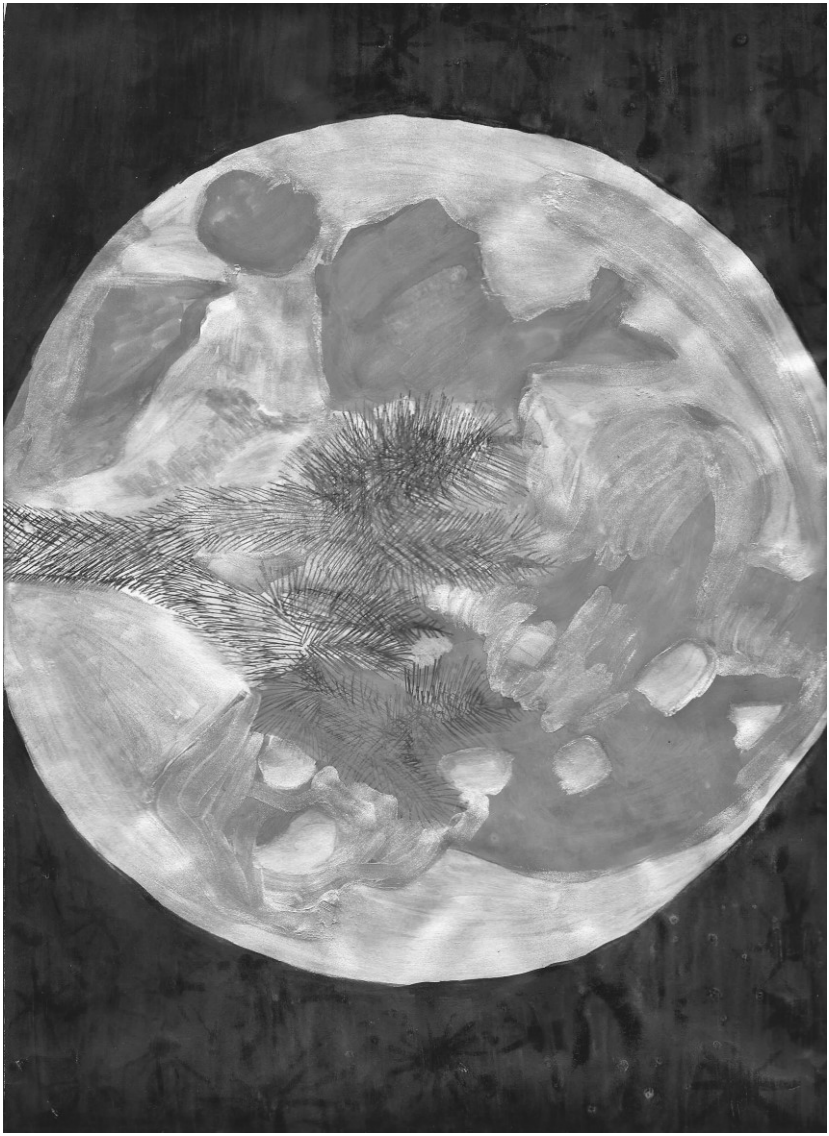
We round the bend and then descend beside the dry creek bed
It's just in time to catch my breath before the climb ahead
We take the turn and spurn right on passing neighbor's homes
A picture perfect twilight with mountains shaped like domes

We keep on our upward lift and complete the destined goal
We look down toward the valley from upon the highest knoll
The tiny cars from far below crawl upward slow and sure
The sun has set beyond the crest, the mountaintops are pure

A pink delight outlines the night cascading from above
And stars confine the darkening line in this time of day I love
Turning back toward home we march on down that hill
To see the grandest sight, the greatest beauty still

For there before our dazzled eyes the valley twinkles light
Of red and green reflections seen from roadways in the night
And in the sky the moon floats high with a silver growing might
The Joshua tree with curling bend peeks out there on the right

We stop to gaze and watch the sight and then we declare
A picture perfect postcard with a backdrop to share



Steve Braff

Cholla Needles

Gnarled fingers on the left
leaning arms of the front in line
for battle stretched thin
in vanishing points past
the ominous clouds
to angry gods call
sharp echoes
crossed blades
and battles won
in the slow hot march
of the Mormons' own flight
for freedom so named
the shagged and spiked
of shade less tree -
Joshua.

Still.
Silent.
Equipoised.
Black feathers.
On brown needles.
Of these twisted boughs.
In the great big blue.
Perched perfect.
Equipoised.
Silent.
Still.

The desert's distress etched wood
door unlocked black knobbed chainless
hasp waiting, enduring, modestly showing
the work of time's sun sand’s wind
triumph of beauty beaten utility
whence long since unhinged
from some pretense of purpose
or perhaps, rather and because, speaks
an ode to imperfect beauty. .

Desert sunrise
gifts gold halos
to silvered spines
teddy bear chollas
hedgerow lines
bearing needles
hear some say jump
behind mountains
purpled silhouettes
on back still sleep
laying low
their own
horizon.

Cholla Needles

This once
white clapboard
box of a home with
new eyes reflects mountains
distant under paled sky with one
green greasewood shrub in front
and perhaps some quite distant
neighbor in view an all
compellingly curious
invitation to stark
and lovely
solitude.

Heart of darkness.
Heart of light.
And all a brambling about
in the menace of dense lace lives
luminance where center tree marries
browning earth to an unseen sky in a lush
dry complexity that pulls the eye in
to a wondering dare past the tear
of brindle branch
and thorn.

Ruth Nolan

Cast

Many bones have been broken here
in the tricky Mojave River quicksand.
Cottonwood trees have split apart, too
gnawed to the marrow by beavers.

Behind me, the shadow of a man,
fishing pole slung across his shoulder.
He tells me he will catch crawdads now,
skin and fry a trout or two for dinner.
He asks me to thread the spineless worm
on his rusty hook. He is ready to begin.

My hands are strong, my fingers shaky.
He casts the lure and waits for a bite
while I snap fat twigs and build a fire.

Season of Lies

Two dragonflies,
and the blue one
loses a wing,
April is endless sky,
falling into your
yellow butterfly
and sometimes
the sun is kind,
pink sand verbena
grows on rocks
this time instead
of sand, swallow,
water will arrive
thick as flies.

Reverse Coyote

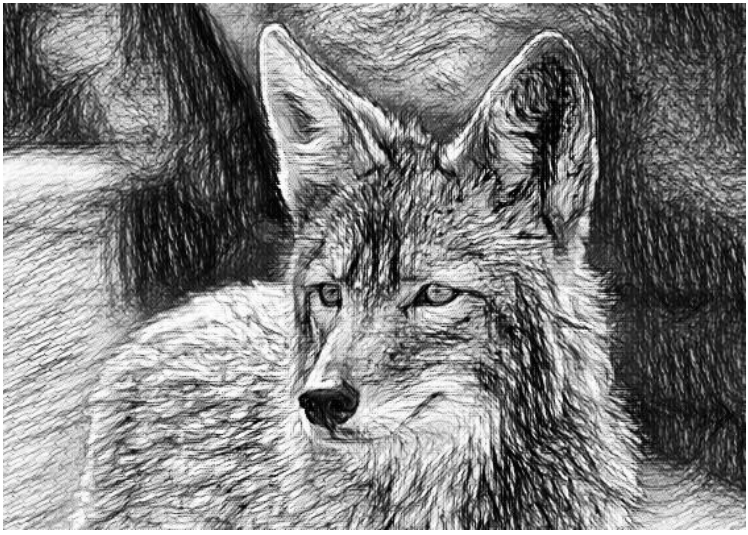
I walk here every day:
the two mile loop
on old dirt roads
that aren't trails
just the remains
of someone's long-ago
vineyard dreams.

I see the remnants of
dried out vines, wires
on splintered wood fences
terraced so exquisitely
on what was once sand dune.

It was also once the ocean floor-
little white shells, bleached
by centuries of sun, the old
shoreline is right here,
wedged between the freeway
and Frank Sinatra Drive.

Two universities side by side
over there, and this
is where I see the golden eagle
when it decides to be seen,
where a raven just tonight
made its timeless caw-caw
where my big dog sees
the mute coyote first, leaps
to chase it down,
and doesn't succeed.

This is the old field
where I pull out the
leash, he's resigned
to not winning, the sun
has long gone down,
so thirsty we both are,
not a whisper of water
or fruit, nor sound.



Teddy Bear Cactus

I saddle my big dog, Brindle
with the two-sided blue
backpack, knit it tight
around his gut, cinch it

together around his chest.
He rubs against boulders,
trying to scrape it off,
he carries water for all of us

and shrugs the weight
away, seeing the coyote
watering hole and too fast
he jumps across a cholla

cactus as dozens of maced,
needlepointed fists grab
onto the soft places on him.
Three hours later, we've

extracted the pain from
his fur and long tongue,
from my friend's hands,
using needlenose pliers.

Indians traced this path
for centuries without dogs,
seamlessly navigating
the narrow uphill trail
we climbed, forgetting.

Dream of the Blue Frog

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned –
from "The Second Coming," W.B. Yeats

Women have more receptors for the feel-good synapses
In their brains than men, and fewer electrical impulses
per day to feed their hearts. Blue frogs underground,

dry and wise beneath the Spa Casino Hot Springs.
Celebrated oasis: if I had known you then, pillared
As we were side by side in January, the blushing sun

perfect in its not too long shining, the moon cresting
its shy face from exile, when the god Mukat created
our bodies and leapfrogged across her wan back she

sighed, trailing heat in her waves, the way jet skis
singe the deep river of Colorado, only marking the
narrow gorge in her heart, you seep in small starts,

not full-lipped assault, deserting me deep in the warm
water, the canyon is summer, the old legends say
that the octopus would drag the possessed ones away,

from the cliffs, and out to sea, my brain is a tired organ,
landlocked and merging towards sea, dams block us all.

Cynthia Anderson

Heir Apparent

A barrier of weather
separates this day from the rest
before and after—

thick cloud cover
lowers triple-digit heat
to unnatural coolness.

Into this anomaly we walk,
into the rocks and spaces
between raindrops—

the storied, archaic
dwelling ground.
Faint, pecked symbols

read clear in muted light—
messages obscured by
the sun's glare,

preserving their secrets.
Drawn by a broken mano,
a sentry rock, a peaked spire

like an arrow aimed skyward,
we climb, alert, checking
ledges before each step—

for all that, startled
by a speckled rattler
in a grotto six feet below—

head tucked among limp
coils, indifferent
like any creature at rest.

Too early to be a threat,
we pass the well-fed
hunter, the one whose

ancestors were here,
who circles the remnants
we see.

Bitter Cucumber

My giant juniper did nothing
to earn this tangle of vines
but exist—provide an armature

for wild tendrils shooting like
star trails on upturned branches.
I let them twine too long, then

had to slash a path to the center,
pull winding stems to the ground,
toss piles of leafy green outside

the canopy, hung with spiny fruits
like alien eggs. Some trickster
splits open those fruits, removes

the almond-sized seeds, hulls them.
I pick up the empty husks, a half-
buried soda can, a plastic box—

but leave three abandoned nests.
Everywhere, dead twigs among
the living. You must know, this

was the mother tree, with more
blue-green berries than any other—
until last year, when grey squirrels

stripped her bare. Ever since,
she's been tentative, not quite
herself. The last hangers-on gone,

she breathes deep while I stand
by her trunk and feel the quiet.
When I leave, coyote and rabbit

take turns in her shadows—
the way it has always been,
the way it will always be.

Microburst

Another blue sky,
a few high clouds,
good weather to work outside—

distracted,
I open the back door
to a conundrum — puddles—

water drips
from eaves along
the full length of the house—

the south side only,
true north is dry—
driveway, trees, garden untouched—

a wall of humidity,
almost steam,
rolls upward from drenched concrete—

and one rogue cloud
beats a retreat,
dissipating as though its dark matter

never existed—
unpredicted,
unheard, and almost unseen.

Waking Life

—Big Morongo Canyon Preserve

Walking alone
in the marsh, the mule deer

eats as she goes, taking tips
of what is still tender—

she is bringing
the world into being, fawns heavy

inside her, summer nearly
over, late for a birth—

flicking tall ears,
she heads toward a thicket,

moving like the dream
of a deer in dappled light—

then finds a place
to bed down, kneels into it,

and vanishes, cloaked by
the domain that sustains her—

Michael Dwayne Smith

Cholla Needle

When the sun sets upward, we'll know the season has arrived.
Ravens backward in flight, cholla needle electric with light, and
out by the old boulders, under Cougar Butte shade,
ancient tortoise wait like buried treasure. They will slow emerge
from slumber when the sound rolls through the warm ground
of the great Mojave. Desert wren will renounce its crown as
King of All Birds, then skitter into a drowning spring wind that
faithfully whirls tumbleweed and aster seed ahead.
When the sun rises downward, the dread season will be upon us,
the past fast-forwarded as future, cholla needle stinging the
purple-bruise skin of night— last starry glimpse in sight.
Land and sky aligned, mighty Pacific yearns for the lost urn of
bone and stone. Cholla needle, dry compass, will point her home.

Otto, on the streets of Adelanto

plays high and bets low

knows stars are cosmic flowers

dances like a white man dancing like a mule deer

his mantra always I am a garage band

says capitalism is dystopian ice cream

knows art makes people

not living life like he owes it to someone

looks like he combs his hair with buttered toast

friends with the old man with the toilet brush moustache

says Everybody is a star and not the person you want to be

reminds you it begins in the middle and ends

at the start and fills up with the ending

always plays the angle

Have a nice day, isn't it?

Story

I try to live as a Human Being,
tried for sixty-seven human years

before one morning the sun showed
my reflection in the river—

I was Coyote, wearing Elk's skull,
trying to see with my feet.

You can call my travels blindness,
but all roads lead one situation

to another. When I bump into trees
and fall dead to the ground

step over me four times and say
Coyote's way is not Elk's way

and then you may call me a fool.
But my medicine is strong.

Instantly, I can become Black Bear
vexed with a magic appetite

and won't care what happens next.

Speedbike

voluptuous panic
is a song of course
and the usual triumph
over banal mistakes that can lead
us there
there being how easily desperation can masquerade
as freedom reckless depraved beauty

dear land of the home and free of the brave
in the liquor of your self-indulgence
the speedway of continuous darkness
into which all things vanish
take off your shoes
pedal your bike
i'll never have the money I owe you
and to speak of the future is avant-
garde

i am nothing if not escape

if my bike were a muscle car
we'd be parked right
now
at a filthy rest stop
screwing

Enumeration

The broken antler on your daddy's red barn door.
The gun your uncle stuffs under his rodeo buckle every night.
The arrogant notes you pass to me in class.
The sass poems you write to apologize.
The flower pink bra you left undone in my bedsheet after school.
The National Geographic asleep on your mama's coffee table.
The snowy echo in your eyes when you stare out a window.
The untied laces on my ambitious shoes.
The magpie trees full of shadow.
The shiftless clouds.
The light.
The beautiful painful light.

Descanso No. 1: Ghost Devotional

Grief is death's wretched daughter,
her terrible curves the Shadow Mountain Road to ruin.
Still, these mornings I lie down next to her
after saint-less nights chasing coyote tail.
Her hips drive my body between moon-slivered horizon
and aluminum stars. Her mouth opens the pink
oubliette to the French-kiss myth of my soul.
With her teeth she leaves a Mohave necklace
round my neck, just tight enough, just
above the pavement, where my bones hang and rattle
like a gospel tambourine by the roadside.

Noreen Lawlor

Creosote

She said she could smell the rain
in the creosote
put some slender branches
behind her ear
tiny grey green berries fell
stuck to the strands of her hair
she grew up in the desert, says
it only shows itself to certain people

I do not smell the rain in the creosote
I smell its tenacity though
how it stands up to windstorms
its roots suck water out of sand
puts on yellow flowers in the spring

there is a ring of it in Mojave
that is carbon dated to be
11,700 years old
alive since the last ice age
one mother plant cloned itself
they are all connected underground
take 20 years to grow a foot

in Joshua Tree we have a forest of it
they want to clear cut
put up a gated community
with 248 densely packed houses

I do not think they smell the rain
I think they smell only money

Ghost Haibun

We are having another big windstorm it knocked over my ugly man cactus, ripped apart my large potted chrysanthemum and it is still whistling down the chimney. All last night it blew gusts and bangs, sounded like it pulled off the roof and right now it feels like it may blow through tonight. Funny when other people talk about high winds, I think, *you should live where I live buddy*. My son and I christened this place Rigel 12, after an old Star Trek episode about this planet that was always so windy you could hang your pots and pans outside to be sandblasted clean. I wish this was a rain storm but then we would have floods at this rate. I named this storm ghost winds because it heralds Halloween (Samhain), All Hallows Eve. The veil is thin these nights, moans and sighs of ancestors, long forgotten Celts' imprisoned song, a haunting wind. My thirty years' dead father keens Tura Lura Lura .

Wild wind whispers
song of the gone
where are you
come home Johnny
it's Samhain

Turkey Vulture

This morning there are high clouds and circling turkey vultures, sun catches the white grey of their feathers on the very tips of their wings.
There were seven circling.
I think of Rilke's poem about circling around God.
Now, the clouds move from grey to bright white and the sky is an intense cobalt blue.
How to get the perfect clarity of the sky when I paint. I got it once by accident.
In cubist works objects are analyzed, broken up and reassembled in abstract form, instead of seeing from one view point we see from many view points.
That's the way the turkey vultures are this morning, some lower, some higher, one broke off. The rest follow in that circular pattern, gliding, catching the thermals, rising like my breath.
Like the flat picture plane of a Picasso. Reflecting shape and movement and disorder and what the eye sees and how the brain interprets that.
Or how the mind brings order but from a different perspective.

boomerang black
broken shadows
sling wing
rise and fall
gliding death

Flash Flood

September 2014… at first I was dancing in it calling to the dogs. Pippen came and ran around, Luna refused to leave the cover of the porch but then the heavens opened up and poured down a ton of rain peppered by hailstones. Rain flowed down from the mountains carrying rocks and stones, sand and muddy water the backyard turned into three great rivers. Five inches of water covered the patio just as it reached the back door, it suddenly stopped, leaving thick gritty coating of mud covering everything. I sunk several inches into it...mud on my shoes, on the dogs' feet. My son, Joe, had gone to the store and forgot his cell phone so I couldn't get hold of him to see if he was safe. When he got back he said that a man had drowned in the arroyo right down the street.

rock strewn mountains melt
hailstones pelt the skylight
in forty minutes the world
dissolves...

Haboob Haibun

Caught in a killer sand storm on the 10 freeway between Palm Desert and Desert Hot Springs (a distance of maybe ten miles) I can not see more than three feet in front of me. The sand pelts my car in sheets like heavy rain or more like hail. I drive blind and hope the rest of the traffic will take it slow. Motorcyclists are off their bikes and hunker down under overpasses. To the north, the San Jacinto Mountains are obliterated and when I finally catch a glimpse of the sky it is a yellow polluted haze.

Sand twister flinging
handfuls of crushed saints
hurl dervish prayers

Mojave

Autumn
wind is an ocean which rages
across this desert sculpting
these rock pillars
relentless as the rattle
of that snake, over there
guarding his little patch of shade

Winter
snow, a foot and a half deep
silvers Joshua Trees turns
Teddy Bear Cholla into grotesque
sea anemones and one green flash
of an iridescent humming bird
searches weighted white branches
for pale flowers

Spring
the Brittle Bush clumps
itself between the boulders
and makes this barren hill
a rock garden
that the Desert Dandelions
weave into a silent yellow
prayer flags

Summer
everything dries up, prickles
stings, burns, bakes and bites
snakes and scorpions and huge red ants
come out by day but there are nights
when a million stars pour through
the cloudy Milky Way

ABOUT OUR POETS

Elluisa Vargas was born in Torrance, CA. She has been writing poems since she was 15 years old. She is a business owner of SudsNShine cleaning service, and a mother of 4 beautiful children. She's lived in Joshua Tree CA since 2009. She told me, "I have always hoped to have my writing published. I've heard Joshua Tree is the place where dreams come to true. So far it has."

Hey folks, ***Dennis Price*** here. Came to the land of the cholla 50 years ago. Left, came back. This is home for me, desolate ranges, animal and plant with intellect. Here I LIVE til I die. No place like home.

Evelyn Christensen is 31 years old and has been a resident of Joshua Tree for most of her life. She is a graduate of Copper Mountain College. She currently works as a librarian. She has a six year old daughter.

Cameron Hendricks was born and raised in Washington State. After a stint in the army, he ended up settling in Yucca Valley. He loves the outdoors, and enjoys spending time with his two daughters. His writing is motivated by the human condition, and enjoys the gritty and realist aspect to poetry. You may contact Cameron at Instagram- @c.m.hendricks or Snapchat- grunt11b2c. His book *Which Way Is Up* is available on Amazon.com.

Debra Walworth moved to Yucca Valley in March of 2015 from Virginia and works at the 29 Palms Branch Library as a library page. Her daughter Katherine is going to Copper Mountain College, and her major is Studio Art.

Steve Braff has been published in *Tea House*, the *Muryoko Journal of Shin Buddhism*, and the *Muscogee Nation News*. He is honored to have his poems selected for publication in *Nomad's Choir* forthcoming 2017 and 2018 issues. Steve's first book, *Forty Days*, inspired by images of the Joshua Tree National Park, is slated for publication by Cholla Needles Press this spring, and he anticipates release later this year of *Exodus Remix - a poetic retell of the Second Book of Moses*. Steve is co-founder of the Santa Ynez Valley Poetry Workgroup and is currently working with the Santa Ynez Valley Arts Association to sponsor a monthly poetry series for the valley. Steve lives with his wife, dog, and two cats in Los Olivos. You can see more of Steve's work at http://stevebraff.blogspot.com/ and he welcomes your comments at stevebraff1@gmail.com

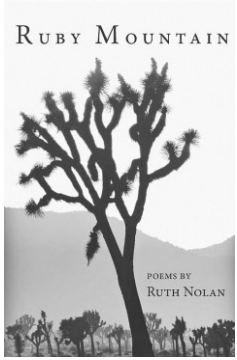
Ruth Nolan is an author based in the Coachella Valley and Mojave Desert. Her debut poetry chapbook, Ruby Mountain, was published in November, 2016 (Finishing Line Press.) Her short story, "Palimpsest" was published in *LA Fiction Anthology: Southland Stories by Southland Writers* (Red Hen Press, 2016), and won an Editor's Reprint Honorable Mention award from *Sequestrum Magazine*, 2016. Her writing has also been published in *James Franco Review; Angels Flight Literary West; Rattling Wall; Desert Oracle; Women's Studies Quarterly; New California Writing-Heyday Books; Lumen; Pacific Review; The Desert Sun and Desert Magazine/USA Today; KCET; Inlandia Literary Journeys; News from Native California,* and *Sierra Club Desert Report*. Her nonfiction book, *Fire On the Mojave: Stories from the Deserts and Mountains of Inland Southern California* is forthcoming in 2017. She's also the editor of *No Place for a Puritan: the Literature of California's Deserts* (Heyday Books, 2009.) A former wildland firefighter for the USFS and BLM, Ruth is Professor of English, Creative Writing and Native American literature at College of the Desert in Palm Desert. She holds her M.F.A. in Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts from the UCR, Palm Desert Low Residency M.F.A. Program.

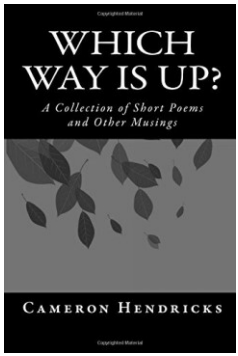
Cynthia Anderson lives in the Mojave Desert near Joshua Tree National Park. Her poems have appeared in journals such as *Askew, Dark Matter, Apercus Quarterly, Split Rock Review,* and *Origami Poems Project*. She is the author of six collections - *In the Mojave, Desert Dweller, Mythic Rockscapes / Barker Dam, Mythic Rockscapes/Hidden Valley,* and *Shared Visions I* and *II*. She frequently collaborates with her husband, photographer Bill Dahl. Cynthia co-edited the anthology *A Bird Black As the Sun: California Poets on Crows & Ravens*.

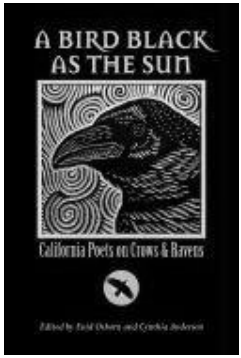
Michael Dwayne Smith lives near a Mojave Desert ghost town with his family and rescued animals. Twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize, recipient of both the Hinderaker Award for poetry and Polonsky Prize for fiction, his work haunts 150+ literary houses, including *Skidrow Penthouse, Cortland Review, burntdistrict, Chiron Review, Word Riot, Gravel, New World Writing, Heavy Feather Review, decomP, WhiskeyPaper, FRiGG, Monkeybicycle,* and *San Pedro River Review.* He edits *Mojave River Review.*

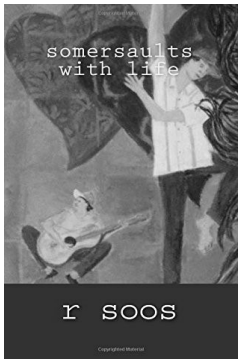
Noreen Lawlor is a poet, artist and therapist who lives in Joshua Tree. She is in the process of completing her second book of poetry and paintings about her last eleven years in Joshua Tree called Mojave Haibun. She shares that the harsh yet fragile environment of the desert has informed her recent writing. Her book *Matilija Days,* about the years she spent in Ojai is available at blurb.com. Her poems have appeared in various anthologies and periodicals including *A Bird Black as the Sun, Inlandia* and *The Sun Runner.*

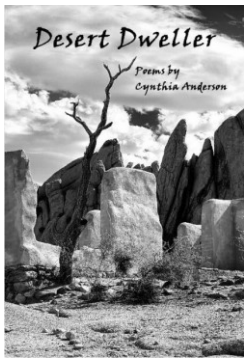
Recent books by poets included in this issue:

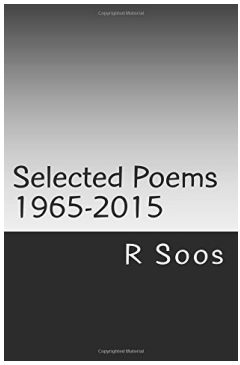












All available at Amazon.com

ABOUT OUR PHOTOS/ART

Cover photo by r soos

The artwork on the title page and pages 3-7, 35-37 and 52-53 were sketched by the silent poet of Joshua Tree.

Photos on page 12, 14 & 15 by Dennis Price

The artwork on page 23 was created by Evelyn Christensen

The artwork on page 39 was created by Katherine Walworth.

Photo on page 42 by Mike Reed
www.instagram.com/explore/tags/naturestaker

Photo on page 43 from Joshua Tree Excursions
www.instagram.com/explore/tags/joshuatreeexcursions

Photo on pages 44 & 47 by Patricia Thompson
www.instagram.com/patricia__thompson

Photo on page 45 posted by Pioneer Town Motel
www.instagram.com/explore/tags/pioneertownmotel

Photo on page 46 by JT Homesteader
www.instagram.com/explore/tags/jthomesteader

Photo on pages 69 & 71 by Cynthia Anderson

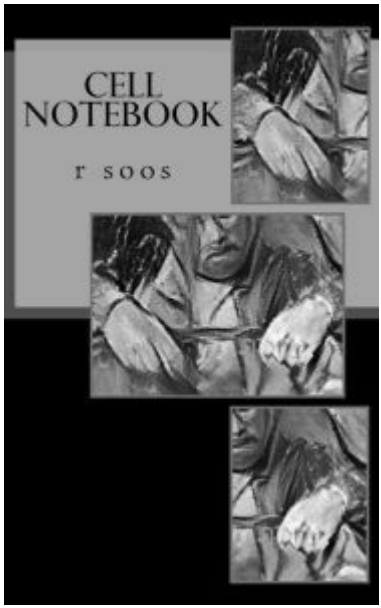
Cholla Needles would like to invite you to submit your poetry, photos and/or artwork for the next issue. Our focus is to publish poets who live in or frequently visit our beautiful desert. We will publish books of poetry by writers who are featured in our pages and do not yet have a publisher. Introduce yourself and let's get to know each other. Send your creative work to chollaneedles@gmail.com

Cholla Needles also plans to have open poetry readings, as well as poetry readings which feature visitors to our area. Keep track of these events by friending and keeping watch at our Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/cholla.needles.3

Cholla Needles is edited by r soos, who edited the international magazine Seven Stars Poetry for over 20 years. His books are available at http://amazon.rsoos.com and you can follow his recent poems and magazine acceptances at http://rsoos.com

r soos wishes to express a deep gratitude to entire volunteer staff at The Way Station in Joshua Tree for providing love and support to members of the community who are often ignored and forgotten by society and its rulers. Deep love and thanks are also extended to Jeff and Alex at the Church On The Hill for providing a place of service and growth. A special shout-out is due to Francis Moss, president of the Desert Writer's Guild for accepting a poet into his group. Elluisa Vargas receives praise for teaching me secrets of Facebook. We are all grateful for Rainbow Stew Gifts of Yucca Valley for carrying poetry by local writers in their friendly shop. Finally, each writer in this issue deserves applause for trusting their work to a new magazine.

Cholla Needles magazines and books are available at Amazon.com & BarnesandNoble.com. Latest book:



earth

will not be able to hold me
beneath the dirt sifted down
from lofty mountains
to this field

my anger will shimmer through
grasses planted to root us
below and burst forth as
earthquakes

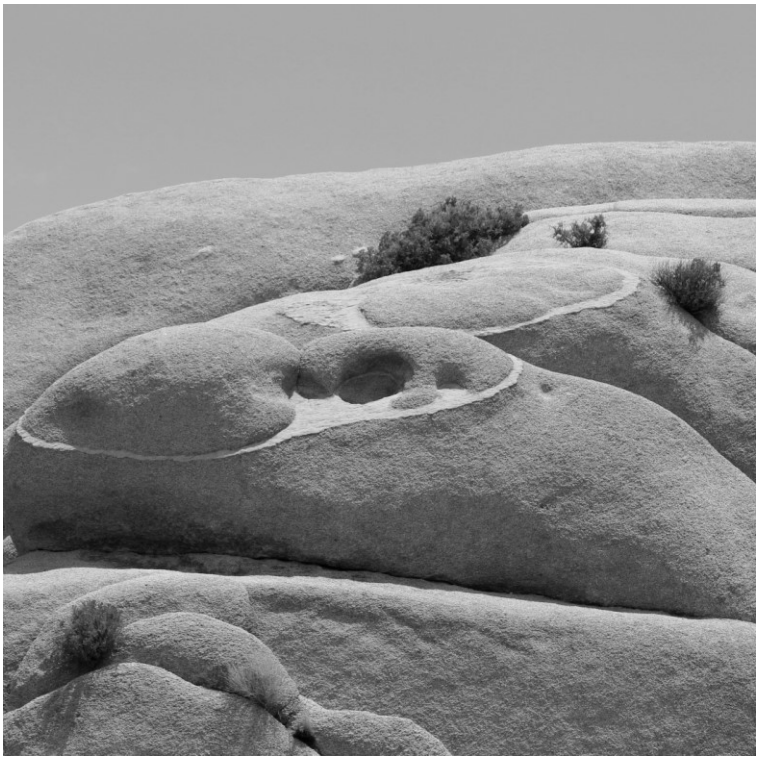
when you judge me to death
I advise total cremation with
dust spread throughout the
state

"r soos' Cell Notebook is a deeply moving, intimate, introspective look at a human being's inner and outer reality leading up to and while being incarcerated. Through the exploration of vulnerability, hopelessness, anger, and resilience, the author challenges us to feel and scrutinize the crushing power of the state over a single individual it views as disposable, as well as exploring issues of innocence, guilt, and society's role in relegating some to an unfortunate path.

soos places us in the confines of a cell, and challenges us to experience what it does to the person inhabiting it, what we might do if we found ourselves in the same situation, and whether we would maintain the same cavalier attitudes toward locking people away and robbing them of their ability to live if we were objects of scorn. Throughout the journey, soos reminds us that strength, beauty, and truth never need leave our sides." - Guy Farmer, The Poet Community

New poetry book coming Spring 2017 from Cholla Needles:

Forty Days



by

Steve Braff

with local photos by Steve Braff and others